

## INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY REPORT ON PATENTABILITY

(Chapter II of the Patent Cooperation Treaty)

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 2003P16290WO	<b>FOR FURTHER ACTION</b>	
See Form PCT/IPEA/416		
International application No. PCT/EP2004/011873	International filing date (day/month/year) 20.10.2004	Priority date (day/month/year) 31.10.2003
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC H04L12/56, H04L29/06		
Applicant SIEMENS MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS S.P.A. et al.		
<p>1. This report is the international preliminary examination report, established by this International Preliminary Examining Authority under Article 35 and transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.</p> <p>2. This REPORT consists of a total of 5 sheets, including this cover sheet.</p> <p>3. This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, comprising:</p> <p>a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (sent to the applicant and to the International Bureau) a total of 43 sheets, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis of this report and/or sheets containing rectifications authorized by this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> sheets which supersede earlier sheets, but which this Authority considers contain an amendment that goes beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed, as indicated in item 4 of Box No. I and the Supplemental Box.</li> </ul> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> (sent to the International Bureau only) a total of (indicate type and number of electronic carrier(s)) , containing a sequence listing and/or tables related thereto, in computer readable form only, as indicated in the Supplemental Box Relating to Sequence Listing (see Section 802 of the Administrative Instructions).</p>		
<p>4. This report contains indications relating to the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Box No. I Basis of the opinion</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Box No. II Priority</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Box No. III Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Box No. IV Lack of unity of invention</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Box No. V Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Box No. VI Certain documents cited</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Box No. VII Certain defects in the international application</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Box No. VIII Certain observations on the international application</li> </ul>		
Date of submission of the demand 04.08.2005	Date of completion of this report 15.02.2006	
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**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY REPORT  
ON PATENTABILITY**

International application No.  
PCT/EP2004/011873

**Box No. I Basis of the report**

1. With regard to the **language**, this report is based on the international application in the language in which it was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.
  - This report is based on translations from the original language into the following language, which is the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of:
    - international search (under Rules 12.3 and 23.1(b))
    - publication of the international application (under Rule 12.4)
    - international preliminary examination (under Rules 55.2 and/or 55.3)
2. With regard to the **elements\*** of the international application, this report is based on (*replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report*):

**Description, Pages**

1-39 received on 06.02.2006 with letter of 03.02.2006

**Claims, Numbers**

1-8 received on 06.02.2006 with letter of 03.02.2006

**Drawings, Sheets**

1/10-10/10 as originally filed

a sequence listing and/or any related table(s) - see Supplemental Box Relating to Sequence Listing

3.  The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:
  - the description, pages
  - the claims, Nos.
  - the drawings, sheets/figs
  - the sequence listing (*specify*):
  - any table(s) related to sequence listing (*specify*):

4.  This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments annexed to this report and listed below had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed, as indicated in the Supplemental Box (Rule 70.2(c)).

- the description, pages
- the claims, Nos.
- the drawings, sheets/figs
- the sequence listing (*specify*):
- any table(s) related to sequence listing (*specify*):

\* If item 4 applies, some or all of these sheets may be marked "superseded."

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ON PATENTABILITY**

International application No.  
PCT/EP2004/011873

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**Box No. V Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement**

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**1. Statement**

Novelty (N)	Yes: Claims	1-8
	No: Claims	
Inventive step (IS)	Yes: Claims	1-8
	No: Claims	
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes: Claims	1-8
	No: Claims	

**2. Citations and explanations (Rule 70.7):**

**see separate sheet**

**Re Item V**

**Reasoned statement with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement**

1 Reference is made to the following documents:

- D1: J.OTT, S. WENGER, N. SATO, C. BURMEISTER, J. REY: "Extended RTP Profile for RTCP-based Feedback (RTP/AVPF); draft-ietf-avt-rtcp-feedback-07.txt" IETF INTERNET-DRAFT, 6 June 2003 (2003-06-06), pages 1-51, XP002276758
- D2: T. FRIDMAN, R. CACERES, A. CLARK: "RTP Control Protocol Extended Reports (RTCP XR), draft-ietf-avt-rtcp-report-extns-06.txt" IETF, INTERNET ENGINEERING TASK FORCE ,AUDIO/VIDEO TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP, 19 May 2003 (2003-05-19), XP002276759

- 2 The document **D1** is regarded as being the closest prior art to the subject-matter of **claim 1**, and shows (the references in parentheses applying to this document): signalling procedure in wireless networks (abstract) according to the rules of an open communication model foreseen protocol stacks are at the interfaces between network elements, the stacks including hierarchical Layers, whose general meaning is known, listed top-down as: Application, Transport, Data Link, Physical for supporting the playback of streaming services, transmitted by a Service Provider to wireless subscriber/s through the messages of a real-time protocol (page 3, line 16 to line 25) at Transport Layer also including ordinary Receiver Reports feedback to the Service Provider by the subscriber/s at a rate set by default, and said Receiver Reports including measurement values of parameters indicative of the QoS at the subscriber side during the ongoing session, so that the Provider adapts the QoS of the streaming service E2E, accordingly, characterised in that includes the following steps performed at the wireless subscriber side:
- a) detecting concurrently with said real-time protocol (page 5, line 1 to line 19; page 8, line 10 to page 9, line 4) if a first condition depending on the measured parameters comes true for indicating that the QoS at the subscriber side is degrading to an attention level, and when this first condition applies, sending, at Data Link Layer, a command to the Transport Layer to switch towards the sending of upgraded Receiver Reports triggered and updated at Data Link Layer at a rate faster than said default one.

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REPORT ON PATENTABILITY  
(SEPARATE SHEET)**

International application No.  
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The subject-matter of **claim 1** differs from the disclosure of document **D1** in detecting concurrently with the faster signalling if a second condition depending on said measured parameters comes true for indicating that the QoS at the subscriber side is raised over a threshold greater than said attention level, and when this second condition applies, sending, at Data Link Layer, a command to the Transport Layer to reinstate the ordinary receiver reports at the default rate.

The problem to be solved by the present invention may be regarded as to increase the stability and the quality of the communication.

The solution to this problem proposed in **claim 1** of the present application is considered as involving an inventive step as neither document **D2** nor any other document cited in the International Search Report discloses a second threshold for determining whether to switch back to ordinary receiver reports at default rate.

The subject-matter of **claim 1** is therefore new (Article 33(2) PCT) and involves an inventive step (Article 33(3) PCT).

- 3 **Claims 2 to 8** are dependent on claim 1 and as such also meet the requirements of the PCT with respect of novelty and inventive step (Articles 33(2), (3) PCT).
  
- 4 **Claims 1 to 8** meet the requirements of the PCT with respect to industrial applicability (Article 33(4) PCT).

## FAST SIGNALLING PROCEDURE FOR STREAMING SERVICES QUALITY OF SERVICE MANAGEMENT IN WIRELESS NETWORKS

### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to the field of the singlecast and multicast of audio-video streaming services in wireless networks having the characteristics recited in the preamble of the claim 1, and more precisely to a procedure for introducing fast end to end transport layer signalling  
10 during streaming services in wireless networks. Possible candidate networks are, for example: mobile radio networks of 2.5G, 3G, B3G, 4G generations, WLANs, and PMP networks with Masters and fixed Slave stations. Common restraint of those networks is that sudden changes in the available bandwidth  
15 can occur on the radio interface. Multimedia streaming services are delivered either by Internet Service Providers or non-ISP providers, indifferently, although the first seem to be as the most promising ones in the next future. The technical problem addressed by the invention arise when  
20 streaming services are provided to wireless (especially mobile) clients.

For the aim of the description a list of used Abbreviations and cited References are included in **APPENDICES 1 and 2**, respectively.

### 25 BACKGROUND ART

Great bandwidth consuming and skill in data transmission are request for delivering multimedia streaming services to remote subscribers, such as: moving pictures and/or hi-fi sound, videoconference, etc. Up till now satellite links or  
30 cable TV are preferred means instead of telephone networks. Recently, mainly due to the explosion of Internet everywhere in the world, several efforts are carried out for offering

multimedia streaming service also through telephone networks, either of the PSTN or PLMN type. As far as the former ones is concerned (still copper wired for a large part), the way for increasing transmissible bandwidth on wired connections is pursued by ISDN and ADSL (but only optical fibres will be the solution in the near future). In the PLMNs case, the unsuitability of 2nd generation for data transmission are overcome by the introduction of upgrading tools for transmitting packet data on shared resources (e.g. the GPRS); while the bandwidth restrictions are overcome by the evolution towards third generation PLMNs (UMTS) deploying a considerable increasing on channel bandwidth and the further capability of managing asymmetric traffic. In most cases wireless connections to the data network are still performed by means of mobile telephone-set connected to laptop computers through data kits for adapting to the packet service (GPRS). Nevertheless, mobile terminals (MS/UE) are becoming gradually more sophisticated to adequately support the increased bandwidth. For example, the reception of television news directly on the little screen of the wireless handset is a reality nowadays, and continuous improvements are easy predictable. The present trend in Europe is that Network Operators act also as service providers, offering a set of services to the clients of the personal communication. Multicast of audio/video services from a Service Centre connected to a Gateway node towards remote subscribers is the argument of several 3GPP specifications (e.g. **TS 25.992**, **TS 25.346**, etc.). Modern PLMNs have gateways nodes also connected to the IP-PDN. In this case different opportunities are open that will be seen after than a glance on Internet is cast.

It is useful to remind that an Internet connection refers to a Client/Server paradigm in which the Server is a

host computer addressed by an unique IP address corresponding to the name of an Internet domain (e.g.: name.com). The Server manages service requests forwarded by the Clients towards remote entities responding to respective URLs of the 5 World Wide Web (WWW) according to a TCP/IP protocol. A browsing software, for instance WAP, is used by the various Clients for connecting to the host and gain access to the selected service. The Server has installed all the software to run the relevant protocols, e.g. HTTP, FTP, TCP, IP, 10 RTP/RTCP, etc.

Turning the attention to the opportunities offered by Internet, a first scenario is that a Network Operator also act as ISP through a Service Centre connected to a gateway node of the core network. In this case the Service Centre 15 includes the Host computer having its own URL. An alternative scenario is that ISPs are different entities from the Network Operators and are connected to the IP-PDN in points distant from the Gateway nodes, but also in this case they offer streaming services to the wireless subscribers at their own 20 URLs. A mixed scenario already is possible.

Fig.1 gives a general representation of the Server/Client paradigm applied to a generic wired-wireless network connected to the IP-PDN one. Two protocol stacks are visible in the simplified example of the figure, a first one 25 at the Client side and the other one at the ISP Server. The client stack includes the following layers listed top-down: Application, Transport, Data Link Client, and Physical Client. The ISP stack includes top-down: Application, Transport, Data Link ISP, and Physical ISP. The two Physical 30 layers at the bottom of the two stacks shown respective connections to the wired-wireless network by means of two interfaces, indicated as Ic and Is. While the Is interface is wired (e.g.: shielded twisted pairs, coaxial cables, optical

fibres), the Ic interface includes both radio connections to/from the wireless terminals and wired connections with the wired network. Transport layers include an End-to-End RTP/RTCP protocol according to Ref.[1], deputed to the 5 delivering (both in singlecasting and multicasting) streaming and real-time IP services. Both RTP data and RTCP SR signalling (Sender Report) are transmitted from the ISP to the wireless Clients; while a RTCP RR (Receiver Report) signalling is transmitted from the Clients to ISP. End-to-end 10 QoS messages conveyed by the RTCP RR signalling are delivered to the Application layer at the ISP side. The aim of the two protocol stacks is that of play-backing multimedia contents without interruptions at the subscriber stations.

The two stacks of **fig.1** are based on the Open System- 15 Interconnection (OSI) Reference Model for CCITT Applications (Rec. X.200). The OSI model plans the overall communication process into (seven) superimposed layers. From the point of view of a particular layer, the adjacent lower layer provides a "transfer service" with specific features. The way in which 20 the lower layer is realised is immaterial to the next higher layer. Correspondingly, the lower layer is not concerned with the meaning of the information coming from the higher layer or the reason for its transfer. The scenario of **fig.1** is referable to any wireless-cum-wired network OSI-compatible 25 but, for the aim of the description, it is referred to the mobile radio system depicted in **fig.4**. Under this assumption, a brief description of the various layers is performed bottom-up.

- Physical layer is a set of rules that specifies the 30 electrical and physical connection between devices. This level specifies the cable connections and electrical rules necessary to transfer data between devices. At the radio interface it specifies the procedure for a correct

transfer of the fluxes of bits on timeslots, for example: TDMA/FDMA, encryption, interleaving, channel coding, FEC, and the reverse functions. This layer offers a pool of logical channels towards the upper layers. In case of radio access, physical layer is further responsible for the following procedures at the RF interface: detection of a physical congestion on the RF means; frame synchronization and adaptive frame alignment of the MSs; monitoring of the quality of the RF links through cyclic measurement of indicative parameters; execution of the Power Control commands of the transmitters; and Cell Selection and Reselection.

- Data Link layer denotes how a device gains access to the medium specified in the physical layer; it also defines data formats, to include the framing of data within transmitted messages, error control procedures and other link control activities. From defining data formats to include procedures to correct transmission errors, this layer becomes responsible for the reliable delivery of information. Usually, the Data Link layer is divided into two sublayers: Logical Link Control (LLC) and Media Access Control (MAC).
- Transport layer is responsible for guaranteeing that the transfer of information occur correctly after a route has been established through the network by the network level protocol. Thus, the primary function of this layer is to control the communication session between client and server once a path has been established by the network control layer. Error control, sequence checking, and other end to end data reliability factors are the primary concern of this layer, and they enable the transport layer to provide a reliable end to end data transfer capability.

- Application layer acts as a window through which the application gains access to all of the services provided by underling protocols.

The QoS concept is defined within mobile radio networks 5 too (for GPRS and UMTS network see respectively TS 22.060 and TS 23.060), that could be a part of the wired-wireless network depicted in **fig.1**. An individual QoS profile is associated with each PDP (Packet Data Protocol) context. The QoS profile (within the mobile radio network) is considered 10 to be a single parameter with multiple data transfer attributes. It defines the quality of service expected in terms of the following attributes: precedence class, delay class, reliability class, peak throughput class, and mean throughput class. There are many possible QoS profiles 15 defined by the combinations of the attributes. A PLMN may support only a limited subset of the possible QoS profiles. During the QoS profile negotiation step defined in subclause "Activation Procedures", it shall be possible for the MS to request a value for each of the QoS attributes, also 20 considering the subscribed ones assumed as default. The network shall negotiate each attribute to a level that is in accordance with the available resources. There are four different QoS classes, namely: conversational, streaming, interactive, and background. The main distinguishing factor 25 between these QoS classes is how delay sensitive the traffic is: Conversational class is meant for traffic which is very delay sensitive while Background class is the most delay insensitive traffic class. These classes can be grouped as groups of RT (real time) and NRT (non-real time) services, 30 for example: RT traffic corresponds to the Conversational and Streaming traffic classes, while NRT traffic corresponds to the Interactive and Background traffic classes. Separated uplink and downlink values are considered for the services.

The present invention deal with the end to end QoS provisioning for audio video streaming services: such services are mapped into mobile radio streaming class, which is characterised by that the time relations between 5 information entities (packets) within a flow shall be preserved. As the stream normally is time aligned at the receiving end, the highest acceptable delay variation over the transmission media is given by the capability of the time alignment function of the application. A delay compensating 10 buffer is provided at this purpose at the Application Layer. Acceptable delay variation is thus much greater than the delay variation given by the limits of human perception.

When Internet services are cast through mobile radio networks, harmonisation is needed between protocols and 15 mechanism specified by IETF and 3GPP authorities, especially as QoS is concerned. Accordingly, in Ref. [4] is quoted: "The 3GPP PS (Packet Switched) multimedia streaming service is being standardized in Ref. [5] based on control and transport IETF protocols, such as RTSP, RTP, and SDP. RTSP is an 20 application level client-server protocol, used to control the delivery of real-time streaming data. Both RTP and its related control protocol RTCP convey media data flows over UDP. RTP carries data with real time requirements while RTCP 25 conveys information of the participants and monitors the quality of the RTP session".

The RTP/RTCP protocol has been proposed since March 1995 as a draft for IETF standardisation by H. Schulzrinne. The last version of the protocol is described in Ref. [1]. As defined in this reference, the RTP Data Transport is 30 augmented by a RTCP control protocol which provides the RTP session feedback on data distribution. Two different UDP ports are used for RTP and RTCP. The RTCP serves three main functions:

1. QoS monitoring and congestion control.
2. Identification.
3. Session Size estimation and scaling.

RTCP packets contain direct information for QoS monitoring. The Sender Reports (SR) and Receiver Reports (RR) exchange information on packet loss, delay and jitter. These pieces of information can be used to implement a kind of flow control upon UDP at application layer using adaptive encoding, such as different compression schemes. A network management tool may monitor the network load based on the RTCP packets without receiving the actual data or detect the faulty parts of the network. RTCP packets are sent periodically by each session member in multicast fashion to other participants. A large number of participants may lead to flooding with RTCP packets: so the fraction of control traffic must be limited. The control traffic is usually scaled with the data traffic load so that it makes up about 5% of the total data traffic. Five different RTCP packet formats are defined:

- 20 • Sender Report (SR);
- Receiver Report (RR);
- Source Description (SDES);
- Goodbye (BYE);
- Application Defined packet (APP).

25 Packet formats are also defined in Ref.[1].

The RTCP Layer at the ISP is informed about the state of the connection by Receiver Report (RR). The minimum interval between consecutive RR is defined to be 5 seconds. The attention is now focused on the RR packet. That report 30 contains the following indications:

1. SSRC of the source for which the RR is sent;
2. The Fraction Lost, i.e. the number of packets lost divided by the number of packets expected since last RR;

3. The highest sequence number received since last RR;
4. An extension of the sequence number to detect possible resets of the sequence numbering;
5. Inter-arrival jitter estimation;
5. Last sender report Timestamp (LSR);
7. Delay since last RR (DLSR).

The feedback provided by RTCP reports can be used to implement a flow control mechanism at ISP application level. The approach belongs to network-initiated QoS control mechanism according to the definition given in Ref.[2], namely: "QoS control bases the application target data rate on network feedback, such as: *Low packet losses lead the application to slowly increase its bandwidth, while high packet losses lead to the bandwidth decrease*". Besides, in reference a significant teaching of how implementing an End-to-End Application Control Mechanism is quoted:

"Our feedback control scheme uses RTP as described in the previous section. The receiving end applications deliver receiver reports to the source. These reports include information that enables the calculation of packet losses and packet delay jitter. There are two reasons for packet loss: packets get lost due to buffer overflow or due to bit errors. The probability of bit errors is very low on most networks, therefore we assume that loss is induced by congestion rather than by bit errors, just as it is done within TCP. Buffer overflow can happen on a congested link or at the network interface of the workstation. To avoid losses at the network interface we used the workstations for the multimedia application exclusively. On receiving an RTCP receiver report (RR), a video source performs the following steps:

- *RTCP analysis. The receiver reports of all receivers are analysed and statistics of packet loss, packet delay jitter and roundtrip time are computed.*

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- *Network state estimation.* The actual network congestion state seen by every receiver is determined as unloaded, loaded or congested. This is used to decide whether to increase, hold or decrease the bandwidth requirements of the sender.
- *Bandwidth adjustment.* The bandwidth of the multimedia application is adjusted according to the decision of the network state analysis. The user can set the range of adjustable bandwidth, i.e., specify the minimum and maximum bandwidth.

10 All steps except the adjustment are independent of the characteristics of the multimedia application. Besides loss, delay jitter, also reported by RTCP, might be used to determine a forthcoming congestion. Due to the related QoS degradation it is desirable to detect congestion before packet loss occurs. In this case the delay will increase due to increased buffering within the network elements. A quick reduction of the bandwidth might completely avoid packet loss. The use of jitter as congestion indicator is only 15 touched in this paper and will be subject to future research 20 .....".

25 Although the RTP/RTCP protocol was originally developed for Internet applications, it can be easily adapted for multicasting streaming contents through a wireless network even in case multimedia contents come from other sources than ISPs. The simple mechanisms of this protocol don't seem to introduce any particular constraints in this direction.

#### TECHNICAL PROBLEM

30 In wireless environment fast reductions of available bandwidth may suddenly occur, possible causes are the following ones: radio condition worsening (e.g.: slow and/or fast fading), long time radio link outage (e.g.: due to cell reselection in mobile radio systems), radio resource

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reconfiguration (e.g.: due to cell change), etc.. In such a fast varying environment, the minimum 5 seconds periodic transmission of RTCP packets may be inadequate to provide effective E2E QoS mechanism. It must be also considered that, 5 while radio conditions get worse, some RTCP packets may be lost; this could lead to high packet loss rate or even to the stalling in media playback (for example if cell change takes place while media streaming has already started playing on the MS).

10 **Figures 2** and **3** show two qualitative examples of stalling situations in case of conventional RTP/RTCP based streaming session, together with proper E2E QoS control mechanism at the ISP, applied to Um interface in case of EGSM-GPRS systems. (see **fig.4**). The two figures are 15 subdivided in two parts, the upper one reports a curve of the available bandwidth  $B_{um}(t)$  on the radio interface, while the bottom part reports a curve of the buffer length  $BLS(t)$  at the Application Layer. The stall in **fig.2** happens during cell change procedure, while in **fig.3** the stall is due to 20 insufficient bandwidth in the new cell. Before discussing the two figures the following definition are needed. A Preferred Buffer Level **PBL** is defined as the amount of data to be received so that the application at MS side starts playbacking the streaming. Different encodings of the media 25 contents can take place during sessions; for that reason Buffer Level and Preferred Buffer Level are both expressed in units of time. So, the Buffer Level in Seconds **BLS** is equivalently defined as the playback time duration of the buffer content. The Preferred Buffer Level in Seconds **PBL** is 30 defined in the same way.

With reference to both the **figures 2** and **3**, we assume that a given initial encoding is set (e.g. an MPEG stream with a given average bitrate) and a streaming session is in

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progress: the AL at the IPS side is sending data to TL at the rate of  $B_{AL}^1$  kbit/s (the apex indicates the first phase of the streaming session). We also assume an initial maximum available bandwidth of  $B_{Max\_Um}^1$  kbit/s on the  $U_m$  interface that leads to a real available bandwidth of  $B_{Um}^1(t)$  kbit/s. The session begins in  $t_0$ . At the beginning of the session it can be assumed that  $B_{Um}^1(t)$  is not affected by high variations. At the MS, the application buffer starts filling in at a constant rate and BLS increases linearly. In a given instant  $t_1$  the parameter BLS reaches the PBLS threshold, so the application layer at MS starts play-backing the media. If the user is still moving in a well-covered area within the cell (i.e. if a good C/I is experimented), the  $B_{Um}^1(t)$  keeps being pretty constant. The application layer buffer is emptied at the same rate it is filled: BLS remains nearly constant in this phase. Now let's assume that, in a give instant  $t_2$ , radio conditions starts worsening. This leads to a progressive decreasing of  $B_{Um}^1(t)$  and, consequently, BLS starts decreasing too. In  $t_3$  a cell change procedure takes place. During this phase,  $B_{Um}^1(t)$  is equal to zero. The application layer goes on playing the media, and BLS goes on decreasing faster.

With reference to **fig.2**, the cell change procedure takes too long and stall in media playback occurs between  $t_3$  and  $t_4$  in correspondence of BLS equal zero. In  $t_4$  the outage of the radio interface ends; the mobile is now camped in a new cell and the available bandwidth is now defined as  $B_{Um}^2(t)$  (the apex now indicates the second phase of the streaming session, subsequent to the cell change). Starting from  $t_4$  the Application buffer begin to be filled and BLS increases again.

With reference to **fig.3**, the stall in the media playback has not occurred between  $t_3$  and  $t_4$ . When the outage of the

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radio interface ends, the available bandwidth  $B_{um}^2(t)$  is not enough to avoid the application buffer be emptied; in this case stall is unavoidable. Note that the End-to-End reaction by ISP may happen after the reception of some RR messages, 5 this could take tens of seconds and it would be based only on RTP packet loss and jitter computation, as a consequence the ISP reaction could be easily too slow and delayed to counteract the insufficient bandwidth. On the contrary, if in 10  $t_4$  the available bandwidth  $B_{um}^2(t)$  is properly dimensioned the session goes on with no problems.

The document "Extended RTP Profile for RTCP-based Feedback (RTP/AVPF)" J. Ott, S Wenger, N.Sato, C. Burmeister, J. Rey discloses a modified RTP Profile for audio and video conferences with minimal control (based upon protocol and 15 concepts defined in "RTP - A Transport Protocol for Real-time Applications," and "RTP Profile for Audio and Video Conferences with Minimal Control") by means of two modifications/additions: to achieve timely feedback, the concept of Early RTCP messages as well as algorithms allowing 20 for low delay feedback in small multicast groups (and preventing feedback implosion in large ones) are introduced. Special consideration is given to point-to-point scenarios. A small number of general-purpose feedback messages as well 25 as a format for codec and application-specific feedback information are defined for transmission in the RTCP payloads. In particular, two definition are introduced:

- Early RTCP mode: The mode of operation in which a receiver of a media stream is often (but not always) capable of reporting events of interest back to the 30 sender close to their occurrence. In Early RTCP mode, RTCP packets are transmitted according to the timing rules defined in this document.

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- 5 - Early RTCP packet: An Early RTCP packet is a packet which is transmitted earlier than would be allowed if following the original scheduling algorithm the reason being an "event" observed by a receiver. Early RTCP packets may be sent in immediate Feedback and in Early RTCP mode.

10 The concept of "event" (observed by the receiver) which can trigger the transmission of an RTCP packet earlier than when expected by the original scheduling algorithm can partially overlap with the concept, present in our invention disclosure, of RRs sent with an higher rate in case of critical conditions over the radio interface (claim 2). Nevertheless, there are basic conceptual differences between said prior document and the present application:

- 15 15 - In the present application, the Data Link layer takes the control of the end to end QoS signaling (Data Link Layer Triggered and Driven procedure); in said prior document, all the signaling is managed at transport layer independently.
- 20 20 - In the present application, physical layer state/condition determines the mode of operation of transport layer end to end QoS signaling;
- 25 - In the present application, cross layer principle is used to enrich RRs sent during the Fast Signaling procedure.

30 The document "RTP Control Protocol Extended Reports (RTCP XR)", T. Fridman, R. Caceres discloses the Extended Report (XR) packet type for the RTP Control Protocol (RTCP), and defines how the use of XR packets can be signaled by an application if it employs the Session Description Protocol (SDP). XR packets convey information beyond that already contained in the reception report blocks of RTCP's sender report (SR) or Receiver Report (RR) packets. The information

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is of use across RTP profiles, and so is not appropriately carried in SR or RR profile-specific extensions. The report block types defined in this document fall into three categories. The first category consists of packet-by-packet 5 reports on received or lost RTP packets. Reports in the second category convey reference time information between RTP participants. In the third category, reports convey metrics relating to packet receipts, that are summary in nature but that are more detailed, or of a different type, than that 10 conveyed in existing RTCP packets.

As regards metric block types, it can be observed that the VoIP Metrics Report Blocks, intended to introduce metrics for monitoring Voice over IP (VoIP) calls, (these metrics include 15 packet loss and discard metrics, delay metrics, analog metrics, and voice quality metrics) implicitly make use, in some cases, of the concept of cross layer information flow to create a more effective end to end QoS signaling. This may partially overlap with the concept we introduced in our invention disclosure of an enhanced RR (FRR) containing also 20 information taken from application and data link layer. (see claims 4 and 5).

Nevertheless, the key concepts of the present application are completely unrelated to the content of the examined document.

With more details, the following concepts:

- 25 - A novel FS procedure at transport layer level, activated in case of critical radio conditions detected at physical layer at MS side; (claim 1, 3, 6)
- the concept of Data Link layer triggered and driven Transport Layer end to end signaling, in case of 30 critical radio conditions, detected at Physical Layer;
- the increased RR sending rate in case of critical radio conditions; (claim 2)

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- the use of an enhanced RR in case of critical radio conditions; (claim 3 and 4 jointly; 3 and 5 jointly); are never mentioned in the document examined.

#### OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

5 The main object of the present invention is a proposal of an end to end signalling procedure intended to improve standard RTCP protocol for the support of streaming services in wireless networks. It may improve end to end QoS management procedures; for example, it may help avoiding 10 media playback stalling when critic conditions on the radio interface are probably going to take place. Basically, the proposal should allow the Service Provider to react fast to the decreasing of the available bandwidth, undertaking appropriate actions, like switching to a less bandwidth 15 consuming encoding although this of course reduces the quality of the audio/video streaming but, to a certain extent, this is preferable than stalling.

#### SUMMARY AND ADVANTAGES OF THE INVENTION

To achieve said objects the subject of the present 20 invention is a signalling procedure, as disclosed in the claims.

Before illustrating the new signalling, a brief illustration of the background context, according to the preamble of claim 1, is needed. The nearest background is 25 constituted by a wireless network which connects a Service Provider to wireless MS clients for multicasting audio/video streaming services. A Transport Layer between Data Link Layer and Application Layer is comprised in both the protocol stacks at the Service Provider and MS sides. An RTP/RTCP 30 protocol makes the Transport Layer able to support streaming services. During an on going streaming session data messages are carried by RTP and control messages carried by RTCP. The

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RTCP messages are managed according to a network-driven QoS scheme, such has the one suggested in Ref.[2]. It is further known that Data Link Layer continuously monitors the quality of the radio link in order to reach a minimum quality target under supervision of Mobility Management functionality. The quality of the link depends on some parameters that may differ from a system to another. As examples of these parameters we can mention: BER, FER, BLER at Data Link layer; the received signal power level; the interference power level, the C/I ratio etc. For the sake of simplicity these parameter are indicated as  $P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n$ .

Now, according to the present invention, when the quality of the radio link is worsening and drops under a given quality level, Data Link Layer sends a triggering signal to the Transport Layer and, consequently, Transport Layer enters in a fast signalling phase. For this reason, the procedure can be defined as "Data Link Triggered". The triggering event happens when a first threshold on the quality level is reached. We define this condition as:

$$20 \quad f(P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n) = 0 \quad (1)$$

During the fast signalling phase RTCP RRs are sent every time a triggering signal comes from the Data Link layer. For this reason the procedure can be further defined as "Data Link Driven". The rate in RRs sending is increased and the RRs messages sent during this phase are called Fast Receive Report (FRR). Each FRR carries all fields included in RR plus the following additional information:

- Information about the real available bandwidth on the radio interface, provided by Data Link layer;
- 30 • Information about the amount of media file cached at client Application Layer.

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Transport Layer operates in fast signalling mode until the quality of the link goes over another given quality level. The triggering-back event happens when a second threshold on the quality level, preferably greater than the 5 first one, in order to introduce hysteresis, is reached. We define this condition as:

$$g(P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n) = 0 \quad (2)$$

When condition (2) is verified, Data Link layer sends a triggering message to the Transport layer that force it to 10 leave the fast signalling phase. Transport Layer switches its operating mode from fast to normal and RR are sent accordingly. At the Service Provider side, during fast signalling phase, with the information carried by FRRs, enhanced QoS control mechanisms can be implemented (some 15 tools are given later in the description).

Considering an embodiment of the invention specific for GSM/EDGE, the minimum interval between two FRR reporting messages is 480 ms, equal to the measurement reporting period at the MS side (see GSM 45.008 v6.0.0, paragraph 8.4.1). By 20 comparison, the minimum interval between two RR messages indicated in Ref.[1] is 5 seconds. The great difference between two intervals gives the Service Provider a more precise knowledge of the bandwidth on the radio interface evolution, paying only an increasing of the required uplink 25 bandwidth. This because the FRR sending spans the limited duration necessary to either favourable overcome critic conditions at the RF interface or definitely disconnect. In most cases cell reselection will be completed without running into stalling of the media playback.

30 Information carried by FRR messages includes: a) the available bandwidth on the radio interface; b) Transport Layer Packet loss ratio and packet delay jitter; and c) the

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amount of media file cached at mobile station side. It can be appreciated that information at points **a)** and **c)** are not included in the current standardization.

5 In conclusion, the proposed invention is focused on the following aspects:

- Exchanging of information between Data Link Layer and Transport Layer are foreseen in order to make Transport Layer aware about the behaviour of radio interface.
- New E2E Transport Layer messaging is foreseen: new RR has been designed, carrying information derived from different layers constraints (from Data Link, Transport, and Application layers).
- New E2E QoS handling approach is presented based jointly on radio interface and Application Layer constraints.

15 According to the present invention, FRR reports convey greater and faster information content with respect to the standard RR reports. As described in detail in the following, the contents at the new points **a)** and **c)** are combined with each other to calculate two prevision parameters ( $T_E$ ,  $T'E$ ).  $T_E$  and  $T'E$  are used to take decisions about the switching of encoding at the Service Provider side. Thanks to these parameters, the Application Layer at the Service Provider is informed that application buffer at the client side is getting empty and/or the available 20 bandwidth at the RF interface is rapidly decreasing. Service Provider is also informed about the end of those 25 unfavourable conditions.

The inter-protocol signalling of the present invention has been originally designed to improve the skill of (E)GPRS 30 to support streaming services from ISPs; the mechanism can be anyway extended as an advanced end-to-end Quality of Service control procedure within any kind of wireless systems. The basic assumptions of the native proposal are:

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1. The ISP is directly connected to the core network and no IP-PDN constraints are considered.
2. Harsher bandwidth constraints are on the radio interface, the interface of the wired network are considered as "non critic" interfaces.

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This proposal is compliant with E2E frameworks for multimedia streaming over wireless system recently investigated in Ref.[3] and [4]. Invention performance improvements are expected also when the first assumption is abandoned and the ISP connected to the IP-PDN some hops distant to the core network, so that IP constraints are considered and the second assumption lost its importance consequently. The effectiveness of the proposed invention, studied with this more severe conditions, appears still good and stall on media play-backing are prevented.

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To summarize, the teaching of the invention is focused on a new RTCP signalling which is completely determined at the MS side, but to be used at the Service Provider side for managing the end to end QoS. How the Service Provider handles the received signalling is a task independent from the criteria used for generating it. Let's make an example referring to a streaming session ongoing in GPRS system (see **fig.4**). Many proposals and QoS frameworks can be found in literature. If radio conditions get worse, we could expect a kind of chain of signalling starting from BSC, passing through SGSN, GGSN and ending at ISP/CP. In addition, RTP/RTCP based QoS mechanisms can be implemented in the system supporting the ongoing session. The proposal of the invention can be seen as an alternative approach intend to integrate radio network information and MS Application Layer information within the RTP/RTCP based QoS mechanisms. Three main benefits can be achieved paying the price of a slight increasing in the required bandwidth on

uplink, namely:

- Faster reaction to network behaviours.
- QoS flow control mechanisms can be refined as the multi-layer information is available.
- 5     • Predictive QoS control mechanisms can be implemented.

In terms of actual improvements expected it can be mentioned:

- Avoid stalling in streaming playback when cell change occur.
- More efficient bandwidth utilisation, as the required bandwidth can be E2E reduced depending on radio conditions.
- 10    • Reduce enqueueing of packets in both SGSN and BSC buffers, as the sending of application data from ISP/CP can be related to actual available bandwidth.

## 15    BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The features of the present invention that are considered to be novel are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. The invention, together with further objects and advantages thereof, may be understood with 20 reference to the following detailed description of an embodiment thereof taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings given for purely non-limiting explanatory purposes and wherein:

- **fig.1**, already described, shows a schematic Server/Client representation including relevant communication protocol stacks and interchanged data/signalling messages between stacks, as in the known art referred to a wireless network used by an ISP/CP to transmit audio/video streaming services;
- 25    - **figures 2 and 3**, already described, show some curves of possible temporal evolution of relevant critical parameters measured at the MS side of the network of the

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preceding figure;

- **fig.4** shows a functional block representation of a wireless network wherein the present invention is implementable;
- 5 - **figures 5 and 6** differ from **fig.1** by the fact that additional inter-protocol signalling messages and end to end FRRs according to the present invention are shown with increasing details;
- **fig.7** shows the format of FRR packet for the delivering 10 of RTCP FRR message of **fig.6**;
- **fig. 8a** shows the message sequence chart of the control signalling procedure of the present invention in case a cell reselection takes place in the network of **fig.4**;
- **fig. 8b** shows the message sequence chart of the control 15 signalling procedure of the present invention in case of transient worsening on the RF interface of the network of **fig.4**;
- **fig.9a** shows some curves of possible temporal evolution 20 of relevant critical parameters measured at the MS side of the network of **fig.4** which implements the control signalling procedure of **fig. 8a**; and
- **fig.9b** shows some curves of possible temporal evolution 25 of relevant critical parameters measured at the MS side of the network of **fig.4** which implements the control signalling procedure of **fig. 8b**.

#### **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF AN EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION**

**Fig.4** shows a 3GPP multi-RAT PLMN whose operation has been modified to embody the invention that will be described. The PLMN comprises a Core Network (CN) connected to two 30 different Access Network, namely, the well consolidated GERAN and the recently introduce UTRAN. The latter improves data service thanks to its greater throughputs and the capability to route the asymmetrical IP data traffic. Both the access

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networks share the same GPRS service, so as the pre-existing GSM Core Network. Both UTRAN and GERAN are connected, on air, to a plurality of mobile terminals of UE/MS types, each including a Mobile Equipment ME with a respective USIM card.

5 The present invention applies to MS/UE terminals of single but preferably multistandard type. The UTRAN includes a plurality of Node B blocks each connected to a respective Radio Network Controller RNC by means of an Iub interface. Node B includes a Base Transceiver Station BTS connected to 10 the UEs through a standard Uu radio interface (differences are given by the present invention). The upper RNC is a Serving S-RNC connected to the Core Network CN by means of a first Iu(CS) interface for Circuits Switched and a second Iu(PS) interface for Packet Switched of the GPRS. It is also 15 connected to an Operation and Maintenance Centre (OMC). The RNC placed below can be a Drift D-RNC and is connected to the upper S-RNC by means of an Iur interface. UTRAN constitutes a Radio Network Subsystem (RNS) disclosed in TS 23.110.

The GERAN includes a plurality of BTSs connected to a 20 Base Station Controller BSC by means of an Abis Interface and to the MSs through a standard Um radio interface (differences are given by the present invention). The BSC is interfaced to the Core Network CN by means of a Gb interface (packet switched) and is further connected to a Transcoder and Rate 25 Adaptor Unit TRAU also connected to the Core Network CN through an A interface. It is also connected to an Operation and Maintenance Centre (OMC).

The CN network of **fig.4** includes the following Network Elements: MSC/VLR, GMSC, IWF/TC, CSE, EIR, HLR, AuC, Serving 30 SGSN, and GGSN. The following interfaces are visible inside the CN block: A, E, Gs, F, C, D, Gf, Gr, Gc, Gn, Gi, and Gmb. The IWF block translates the Iu(CS) interface into the A interface towards MSC/VLR block. The TC element performs the

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transcoding function for speech compression/expansion concerning UTRAN (differently from GSM where this function is performed outside the CN network) also connected to the MSC block through the A interface. The GMSC is connected to the 5 MSC/VLR through the E interface and to a Public Switched Telephone Network PSTN and an Integrated Services Digital Network ISDN. Blocks CSE, EIR, HLR, AUC are connected to the MS /VLR through, in order: the Gs, F, C, and D interfaces, and to the SGSN node through the Gf and Gr interfaces. The 10 SGSN block is interfaced at one side to the GGSN node by means of the Gn interface, and at the other side both to the Serving RNC by means of the Iu(PS) interface and to the BSC through the Gb interface. The GGSN is further connected to an IP-PDN network through the Gi interface, and to Service 15 Providers SPs through the Gmb interface. The Core Network CN consists of an enhanced GSM Phase 2+, as described in **TS 23.101**, with a Circuit Switched CS part and a packet Switched part (GPRS). Another important Phase 2+ is the CAMEL and its Application Part (CAP) used between the MSC and CSE 20 for Intelligent Network, as described in **TS 29.078**.

In operation, node MSC, so as SGSN, keep records of the individual locations of the mobiles and performs the safety and access control functions. More BSS and RNS blocks are connected to the CN Network, which is able to perform either 25 intrasystem or intersystem handovers/cell reselections. An international Service Area subdivided into National Service Areas covered by networks similar to the one of **fig.4** allows the routing of either telephone calls or packet data practically everywhere in the world. Many protocols are 30 deputed to govern the exchange of information at the various interfaces of the multi-RAT network. The general protocol architecture of the signalling used in the network includes an Access Stratum with a superimposed Non-Access Stratum

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(NAS). The Access Stratum includes Interface protocols and Radio protocols for exchanging User data and control information between the CN and the UE. These protocols contain mechanisms for transferring NAS messages 5 transparently, i.e. the so-called Direct Transfer DT procedures. The NAS stratum includes higher level protocols to handle control aspects, such as: Connection Management CM, Mobility Management MM, GPRS Mobility Management GMM, Session Management SM, Short Message Service SMS, etc. For the aim of 10 the description, the only protocol layers interested by the present invention are the ones mentioned in the illustration of **fig.1**.

The embodiment of the invention mainly consists in the addition of: a) new inter-protocol signalling messages (at 15 MS side) to the representation of **fig.1**, as illustrated in **figures 5 and 6** and b) new end to end RTCP messages (defined FRRs) that differ from standard RRs for the information they carry and the rate at which they are sent. The actions undertaken at Client side (MS/UE) for generating the various 20 type of signalling messages exchanged between adjacent Layers, are well detailed in the respective callouts visible in those self-explanatory figures. The structure of the **FFR** message is depicted in **fig.7**. In **fig.8a** a message sequence chart of the signalling procedure is represented for the case 25 a cell reselection takes place during a streaming session through the network of **fig.4**. **Fig.8b** differs from the preceding one by the fact that cell reselection does not take place: a temporary worsening at the RF interface takes place only.

30 Without limitation, the successive figures are referred to the GPRS system but the same description is valid for UMTS and more in general for all the wireless networks operating in accordance with a protocol structure as the depicted one.

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With reference to **fig.7**, the only difference between the **FRR** message and the standard structure of the **RR** message is given by the presence of two additional fields named "Actual  $B_{Um}$ " and "BL", respectively. The first one includes 5 the value in kbit/s of the real available bandwidth at the  $Um$  interface; the second one is the Buffer Level defined as the amount of data bytes stored in a delay-compensating buffer at the Application Layer.

Considering the **figures 8a** and **8b**, some parallel time 10 lines (dashed) departing from corresponding network elements on the top are drawn for indicating the boundaries of the protocol Layers visible in **figures 5** and **6** both at the Client and Server sides. Thick sloped arrows between couples of parallel lines represent messages required to implement 15 the fast signalling procedure; such messages are exchanged between entities and protocol agents; all the signalling subject of the present invention is included; thin arrows represent standard signalling according to **Ref.[1]**. The name of the messages are indicated on the corresponding arrows, so 20 as in **APPENDIX 1**. The message sequence chart of **figures 8a** and **8b** is ideally subdivided in three sequential zones of operation:

- a first zone starts from the streaming Session Initiation (not shown) and prosecutes until a condition 25 for transmitting an SFS message is verified;
- a second zone starts from the transmission of the SFS message and terminates when a last FRR message is transmitted upon the reception of a message **TLastFRR**;
- a third zone starts after last FRR message is 30 transmitted and prosecutes up to the end (not shown) of the session.

The case of **fig.8a** is described at first. The highlighted time window starts a little time before the

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triggering event for Cell Reselection is verified. In this circumstance the measured QoS is unavoidably continuously decreasing until a new cell is selected.

#### FIRST ZONE OF THE MESSAGE SEQUENCE CHART

5 With reference to fig.8a, the initiation of the Streaming Session is a known procedure that can be performed as indicated in Ref.[3]. After initiation, a given encoding is set and a Downlink Streaming Session is ongoing for a given subscriber in a given cell. RTP/RTCP and UDP make the 10 Transport Layer (TL). An E2E RTP/RTCP connection corresponding to the first two arrows has been established and, at ISP side, the Application Layer (AL) is sending data to the Transport Layer at the average rate of  $B_{AL}^{-1}$  kbit/s. The available bandwidth on the  $U_m$  interface is related to the 15 varying radio channel conditions. A maximum RLC/MAC available bandwidth on  $U_m$  interface of  $B_{Max\_Um}^{-1}$  kbit/s is assumed. The real available bandwidth  $B_{Um}$  on  $U_m$  interface depends on both the coding scheme used and BLER. As coding scheme performance vs. C/I and Link Adaptation Algorithm are given, a factor 20  $\alpha(C/I)$  can be introduced so that:

$$B_{Um}^{-1} = B_{Max\_Um}^{-1} \cdot \alpha(C/I). \quad (3)$$

As C/I varies during the session,  $B_{Um}^{-1}$  varies too: due to this time-variation, the available bandwidth may be also indicated as  $B_{Um}^{-1}(t)$ . If a protocol overhead value  $\Delta_{OverHead} (<1)$  between 25 DLL and AL layers is assumed, the application buffer at MS side is being filled at the rate:

$$Buf_{IN}^{-1} = B_{Um}^{-1} \cdot \Delta_{OverHead} \quad (4)$$

When PBL is reached, the application starts emptying the buffer at the rate:

30  $Buf_{OUT}^{-1} = B_{AL}^{-1} \quad (5)$

Note that Base Station Controller (BSC) LL-PDU buffer is

filled in at the rate:

$$BufBSC_{IN}^{-1} = \frac{B_{UL}^{-1}}{\Delta_{OverHead}} \quad (6)$$

and it is emptied at the rate:

$$BufBSC_{OUT}^{-1} = B_{Um}^{-1} \quad (7)$$

5 During this initial phase of the streaming session, RTCP signalling is performed in the ordinary manner, e.g. the RR messages are sent every 5 seconds and E2E QoS managing is done as described in Ref.[2] or Ref.[3] (these are just examples of "Ordinary" QoS Control). The MS, during its 10 ordinary operation, continuously monitors if some conditions for cell reselection may happen: Ref.[5] and Ref.[6] are 3GPP standards valid for (E)GPRS Cell Reselection and Measurements procedures, respectively. In particular, Physical Layer issues each 480 ms a Measurement Result (MR Report) to the 15 Data Link Layer. No matter which is the cell reselection criteria used, it can be assumed a cell reselection procedure is started when a given condition on the average received RF signal level on BCCH carriers on serving and surrounding cells is verified. As known, the MS has capability of 20 measuring the received RF signal level on the BCCH carrier of the serving and surrounding cells and calculating the average received level  $RLA\_P_i$  for each carrier. Let's define the condition that makes cell change start as:

$$f(RLA\_P_1, RLA\_P_2, \dots, RLA\_P_n) = 0 \quad (8)$$

25 A new condition that in predictive mode triggers the beginning of a "fast signalling phase" before the cell change start is defined as:

$$f'(RLA\_P_1, RLA\_P_2, \dots, RLA\_P_n, UCS, BLER, ATSs, MuFact) = 0 \quad (9)$$

Condition (9) is related to different variables, namely:  
30 the Received Level Average ( $RLA\_P_i$ ) for each carrier; the UCS

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and BLER at RLC/MAC layer; the ATS to the MS; and the Multiplexing Factor (MuFact) indicating the number of MSs which share the timeslot/s allocated to the considered MS. The criterion to set condition (9) is to pursue a combination of measured parameter values by which this condition indicates that the MS is running into one, or more, the following situations:

- $B_{Um}$  is rapidly decreasing;
- Cell Change is probably going to happen;
- 10     • A some seconds long outage on the Um interface will probably occur.

Because of condition (9) only depend on parameters measured at Physical Layer PHL, it is reasonable to test this condition every time a measurement reporting (see Ref.[6]) is 15 performed. As a consequence, condition (9) is tested concurrently with the sending of the ordinary signalling, to say, the Receiver Reports RR. When condition (9) is verified at MS side the protocol enters the successive operating zone to start a fast signalling phase.

## 20     SECOND ZONE OF THE MESSAGE SEQUENCE CHART

The main goal of this zone is to allow the media content to be fully play backed avoiding the emptying of the application buffer in the middle of the streaming. To reach this purpose the following steps are sequentially executed at 25 the MS side:

1. Once condition (9) is verified, an inter-protocol message **SFS** is sent from the RLC/MAC protocol at Data Link Layer to the RTP/RTCP protocol at Transport Layer, in order to notify the beginning of a new and temporary 30     RTCP fast signalling phase. When entering the fast signalling phase RTCP changes its policy for RR sending. The duration of the fast signalling phase depends on the

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delay in coming true of condition (8). Another condition in grade of influencing the duration of the fast signalling phase will be introduced in the description of the successive **fig.8b**.

- 5        2. Every time a measurement reporting is performed, until condition (8) is not verified an inter-protocol **TFRR** (Trigger Fast Receiver Report) message is sent from the RLC/MAC protocol at Data Link Layer to the RTP/RTCP protocol at Transport Layer. Note that TFRR messages are triggered by Physical Layer Measurements Reporting which carries information about  $B_{um}$  ultimately determined by:
- 10        • the number of Time Slots allocated;  
          • the scheduling policy on those TSs;  
          • the coding scheme used;  
          • the BLER.
- 15        3. Every time a TFRR message is received at Transport Layer, an inter-protocol **GetBL** message is sent from the Transport Layer to the Application Layer to have returned information about the state of the application buffer.
- 20        4. Every time a GetBL message is received at Application Layer, an inter-protocol message **BL** is sent back to the Transport Layer. The **BL** message includes information about the state of application buffer, e.g. Buffer Length carrying the value of the BL time-varying parameter.
- 25        5. Every time a **BL** message is received at the Transport Layer, a new RR message called **FRR** is sent end-to-end to the peer layer at the Service Provider. The FRR message basically includes:
- 30        • all information included in ordinary RR messages;  
          • information about  $B_{um}$  extracted from the TFRR message;

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- information about the state of application buffer extracted from the BL message.

6. Steps 2 to 5 are repeated cyclically and condition (8) is tested concurrently with the sending of the faster

5 signalling, to say, the FRR Reports. When condition (8) is verified in step 2 the remaining steps 3, 4, and 5

are completed; then Cell Reselection procedure takes place. Various types of Cell reselection procedures are described in Ref.[5], all implementable in this step. In

10 CCN mode, Data Link Layer at the MS sends a CCN (Cell Change Notification) message to the peer Data Link Layer at the BSC. The CCN message notifies the network when the cell reselection is determined and delays the cell re-selection to let the network respond with a PDA message including neighbour cell system information.

15 Then the MS disconnects the old cell and enters a selected one. While cell change takes place, no TFRR messages are sent and steps 2 to 5 are suspended consequently.

20 7. When MS is camped on the new cell there is no reason to continue the fast signalling phase (assuming, of course, that condition (9) is not verified in the new cell). A last inter-protocol message **TLastFRR** (Trigger Last Fast Receiver Report) is sent from the RLC/MAC protocol at 25 Data Link Layer to RTP/RTCP protocol at Transport Layer. The message carries information about  $B_{um}$  in the new cell and also indicates to the Transport Layer the end of the fast signalling phase.

30 8. Steps 3, 4, and 5 are repeated and the last FRR message notifies to peer Transport Layer at ISP side the end of the fast signalling phase.

#### THIRD ZONE OF THE MESSAGE SEQUENCE CHART

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9. At the end of the fast signalling phase, Transport Layer switches back RTCP to its ordinary mode of operation. Might happen that the various steps are repeated also in the new cell.

5 Now the case of **fig.8b** is described. The time window highlighted in the figure starts some time before the triggering of the fast signalling phase and last till the improvement of radio conditions makes RTCP leave the fast signalling phase.

10 With reference to **fig.8b**, the relevant message sequence chart almost completely coincides with the one of the preceding figure, except for the absence of both messages CCN and PDA related to the cell reselection procedure. In operation, the overall signalling procedure completes the 15 **first zone** of the message sequence chart and, if condition (9) is verified, enters the **second zone** where Transport Layer operates in fast signalling mode. **Steps 2 to 5**, are cyclically repeated until the link quality returns over another given quality level, greater than the one which drove 20 condition (9) being true. With that, the some grade of hysteresis is introduced. We define a new condition for detecting this event as:

$$g(RLA\_P_1, RLA\_P_2, \dots, RLA\_P_n, UCS, BLER, ATSS, MuFact) = 0 \quad (10)$$

Condition (10) is tested at Physical Layer PHL in **step 2** 25 in the only case the preceding condition (9) is not more verified due to a QoS improvement, such as an increased available bandwidth for the service. Condition (10) is tested concurrently with the sending of the faster FRR signalling. When condition (10) is verified in **step 2**, the inter-protocol 30 message TFRR is replaced with **TLastFRR** and the remaining **steps 3, 4, and 5** are completed. Also in this case **last FRR** message notifies to peer Transport Layer at ISP the end of

the fast signalling phase and Transport Layer switches back RTCP to its ordinary mode of operation. Because of the event triggering conditions (8), (9), and (10) are tested every time a measurement reporting is performed, might happen that 5 the depicted signalling is repeated more than once during the active session.

**Fig.9a** schematically represents the evolution of the available bandwidth and buffer length at MS side: before, during, and after a cell change happens with the support of 10 the fast signalling procedure of the invention, together with a proper End-To-End QoS management policy. With reference to 15 **fig.9a**, before instant  $t^*$  the pictured  $B_{um}(t)$  and **BLS** behave exactly like in **fig.3**. The Fast Signalling phase begins little before the instant  $t^*$ . An immediate encoding switching at ISP is assumed at the instant  $t^*$ . The lower quality encoding used after switching allows the application 20 buffer at MS to be filled at the same rate (in terms of SecondOfMediaFile/s) it was before  $t_2$ . Of course, as  $B_{um}$  keeps decreasing, the application buffer filling rate at MS decreases too. Anyway, if a proper encoding is chosen on time 25 at the instant  $t^*$ , the application buffer at MS doesn't fall completely emptied during the interval  $t_3-t_4$  and stall is avoided during the outage of the RF interface. At time  $t_4$  the MS is camped on the new cell and the available bandwidth  $B_{um}^2(t)$  is properly dimensioned; in this case the application 30 buffer is filled at the same rate it is emptied and the session goes on with no problems.

**Fig.9b** schematically represents the evolution of the available bandwidth and buffer length at MS side in case the 35 side effect of a transient RF worsening at the Um interface is faced by the fast signalling procedure of the invention. With reference to **fig.9b**, until instant  $t^*$  included the pictured  $B_{um}(t)$  and **BLS** behave exactly like in **fig.9a**. At

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instant  $t^*$  fast signalling phase (FRR) has already started. Thanks to the predictive signalling, a proper lower encoding is chosen on time at the instant  $t^*$  so that the **BLS** is kept constant. After  $t^*$  the available bandwidth  $B_{Um}^1(t)$  starts 5 increasing again. At the instant  $t_3$  condition (10) is verified and normal RR is reinstated. After  $t_3$  both  $B_{Um}^1(t)$  and **BLS** are kept constant at the value they have at time  $t_2$ .

Basically, both the **figures 9a** and **9b** show the proposed signalling procedure at work to face different critical 10 situations, all of them having as an immediate result the reduction of available bandwidth. As a consequence, the ISP can react fast to the decreasing available bandwidth. Appropriate actions like switching to a less bandwidth consuming encoding can be undertaken early. This of course 15 reduces the quality of the audio/video streaming but playback stalling of the media can be avoided. As known, the most popular standards encoder in audio and/or video, such as: MPEG-video, MPEG-audio, Dolby Digital AC-3, etc., allow coding with different selectable bitrates. The skill of the 20 invention in alerting the ISP appears clearly from the curves.

#### **ENHANCED END-TO-END QoS CONTROL ALGORITHMS**

This section gives an example of a simple QoS control algorithm that can be implemented based on the fast 25 signalling procedure. We assume the fast signalling procedure is made of 1, 2, ..., N FRR messages. The  $i$ -th FRR report is received at the ISP at the time  $t(i)$  and it contains the following information:

- $B_{Um}(i)$  [kbit/s];  $B_{Um}$  computed when the  $i$ -th FRR is sent;
- $BL(i)$  [kbyte]; BL measured when the  $i$ -th FRR is sent.

When the  $i$ -th FRR report is received at the ISP, the following parameters are computed:

$$T_E(i) = \frac{35}{B_{AL}(i) - B_{Um}(i) \cdot \Delta_{OverHead}} \quad (11)$$

$$T_E'(i) = \frac{T_E(i) - T_E(i-1)}{t_i - t_{i-1}} \quad (12)$$

Based on these parameters, a decision is made on whether to switch or not the encoding used for the media stream. If 5 we define the positive constants **L** and **H**, the criterion can be formulated as follows:

```

if  $T_E(i) > 0$  then "Change Encoding (Quality Downgrade)"
else if  $T_E'(i) < -L$  then "Change Encoding (Quality
Downgrade)" (13)
10      if  $T_E'(i) > H$  then "Change Encoding (Quality
Upgrade)".

```

The meaning of the previous conditions is: if the application buffer is getting empty or if the available bandwidth is rapidly decreasing, then change the encoding 15 (quality downgrade) used for the media application. If available bandwidth is rapidly increasing then change the encoding (quality upgrade).

## APPENDIX 1

## ABBREVIATIONS

	3GPP	3rd Generation Partnership Project
5	ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
	AL	Application Layer
	ATS	Allocated Time Slots
	AuC	Authentication Centre
	BCCH	Broadcast Control Channel
10	BER	Bit Error Rate
	BL	Buffer Level
	BLER	Block Erasure Rate
	BLS	Buffer Level in Seconds
	BSC	Base Station Controller
15	BTS	Base Transceiver Station
	CAMEL	Customised Application for Mobile network
		Enhanced Logic
	CAP	Camel Application Part
	CCITT	Comité Consultatif International Télégraphique et
20		Téléphonique
	CCN	Cell Change Notification
	C/I	the received Carrier to Interference power ratio
	CSE	Camel Service Environment
	DLL	Data Link Layer
25	DLSR	Delay Since Last SR
	E2E	End to End
	(E)GPRS	Enhanced General Packet Radio Service
	EIR	Equipment Identity Register
	FEC	Forward Error Correction
30	FER	Frame Error Rate
	FRR	Fast Receiver Report
	FTP	File Transfer Protocol
	GERAN	GSM/EDGE Radio Access Network

	GGSN	Gateway GPRS Support Node
	GMSC	Gateway MSC
	GPRS	General Packet Radio Service
	HLR	Home Location Register
5	HTML	HyperText Markup Language
	HTTP	Hyper Text Transport Protocol
	IETF	Internet Engineering Task Force
	ISDN	Integrated Service Digital Network
	ISP	Internet Service Provider
10	IWF	Interworking Function
	LL-PDU	Logical Link- Packet Data Unit
	LSR	Last SR Timestamp
	MPEG	Motion Picture Expert's Group
	MR	Measurement Result
15	MS	Mobile Station
	PBL	Preferred Buffer Level
	PBLS	Preferred Buffer Level in Seconds
	PDA	Packet Data Acknowledge
	PHL	Physical Layer
20	PMP	Point-to-Multipoint
	QoS	Quality of Service
	RAT	Radio Access Technology
	RF	Radio Frequency
	RNC	Radio Network Controller
25	RR	Receiver Report
	RTCP	RTP Control Protocol
	RTP	Real Time Transport Protocol
	RTSP	Real Time Streaming Protocol
	SDP	Session Description Protocol
30	SFS	Start Fast Signalling
	SGSN	Serving GPRS Support Node
	SP	Service Provider
	SR	Sender Report

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	SSRC	Synchronisation Source
	TC	TransCoder
	TCP	Transmission Control Protocol
	TFRR	Trigger Fast Receiver Report message
5	TL	Transport Layer
	TLastFRR	Trigger Last Fast Receiver Report message
	UCS	User Coding Scheme
	UDP	User Datagram Protocol
	UE	User Equipment
10	UMTS	Universal Mobile Telecommunication System
	USIM	UMTS Subscriber Identity Module
	UTRAN	UMTS Terrestrial Radio Access Network
	URL	Uniform Resource Locator
	VLR	Visitor Location Register
15	WAP	Wireless Application Protocol
	WLAN	Wireless Local Area Netwok

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**APPENDIX 2****CITED REFERENCES**

[1]: "RTP: A transport Protocol for Real Time Applications",

5 IETF RFC 3550, July 2003;

[2]: I. Busse B. Deffner, H. Schulzrinne, "Dynamic QoS Control of Multimedia Applications based on RTP", May 30, 1995;

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[3]: H. Montes, G. Gomez, R. Cuny, J. F. Paris, "Deployment of IP Multimedia Streaming Services In Third-Generation Mobile Networks", IEEE Wireless Communications, October 2002;

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[4]: H. Montes, G. Gomez, D. Fernandez, "An End to End QoS Framework for Multimedia Streaming Services in 3G Networks", PIMRC 2002;

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[5]: 3GPP TSG Service and System Aspects, "Transparent End-to-End PS Streaming Services (PSS); Protocols and Codecs", Rel4, TR 26.234 v4.2.0, 2001.

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[6]: 3GPP TS 44.060 V6.2.0 (2003-04); Technical Specification; 3rd Generation Partnership Project; Technical Specification Group GSM/EDGE Radio Access Network; General Packet Radio Service (GPRS); Mobile Station (MS) - Base Station System (BSS) interface; Radio Link Control/Medium Access Control (RLC/MAC) protocol; (Release 6);

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[7]: 3GPP TS 45.008 V6.2.0 (2003-04); Technical Specification; 3rd Generation Partnership Project; Technical Specification Group GSM/EDGE; Radio Access Network; Radio subsystem link control (Release 6).

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**CLAIMS**

1. Signalling procedure in wireless networks according to the rules of an open communication model foreseen protocol stacks are at the interfaces between network elements, the 5 stacks including hierarchical Layers, whose general meaning is known, listed top-down as: Application (AL), Transport (TL), Data Link (DLL), Physical (PHL) for supporting the playback of streaming services, transmitted by a Service Provider (SP, ISP) to wireless subscriber/s (MS) through the 10 messages of a real-time protocol (RTP/RTCP) at Transport Layer (TL) also including ordinary Receiver Reports (RR) feedback to the Service Provider by the subscriber/s (MS) at a rate set by default, and said Receiver Reports (RR) including measurement values of parameters (MR) indicative of 15 the QoS at the subscriber side during the ongoing session, so that the Provider adapts the QoS of the streaming service E2E, accordingly, **characterised in that** includes the following steps performed at the wireless subscriber side:

- a) detecting concurrently with said real-time protocol if a 20 first condition depending on the measured parameters (MR) comes true for indicating that the QoS at the subscriber side (MS) is degrading to an attention level, and when this first condition applies, sending, at Data Link Layer (DLL), a command (SFS) to the Transport Layer (TL) to 25 switch towards the sending of upgraded Receiver Reports (FRR) triggered and updated at Data Link Layer (DLL) at a rate faster than said default one;
- b) detecting concurrently with the faster signalling (FRR) 30 if a second condition depending on said measured parameters (MR) comes true for indicating that the QoS at the subscriber side (MS) is raised over a threshold greater than said attention level, and when this second condition applies, sending, at Data Link Layer (DLL), a

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command (TLastFRR) to the Transport Layer (TL) to reinstate the ordinary receiver reports (RR) at the default rate.

2. The procedure of the preceding claim, characterised in that said faster rate is equal to the measurement reporting (MR) rate from the Physical Layer (PHL).

3. The procedure of one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said first and second conditions are tested at Physical Layer (PHL).

10 4. The procedure of one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said upgraded received reports (FRR) include additional information on the actual value of the available service bandwidth ( $B_{Um}$ ) at the subscriber side (MS).

15 5. The procedure of the preceding claim, characterised in that said upgraded received reports (FRR) include additional information on the actual filling in level (BL) of a delay compensating buffer managed at the Application Layer (AL) at the subscriber side (MS) for accommodating the 20 incoming data and play-backing the streaming service.

6. The procedure of the preceding claim, characterised in that said upgraded receiver reports (FRR) are obtained at step a) by the following sequential steps:

- every time a measurement reporting (MR) is received at 25 Data Link Layer (DLL), a first inter-protocol message (TFRR) including said actual value of the available service bandwidth ( $B_{Um}$ ) is sent from this Layer to the Transport Layer (TL);
- every time the first inter-protocol message (TFRR) is received at Transport Layer (TL), a second inter-protocol message (GetBL) is sent from this Layer to the 30

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Application Layer (AL) to have returned information on the state of the Application buffer (BL);

- every time the second inter-protocol message (GetBL) is received at Application Layer (AL), a third inter-protocol message (BL) including the actual value of the buffer level (BL) is sent back from this Layer to the Transport Layer (TL);
- every time the third inter-protocol message (BL) is received at Transport Layer (TL), said upgraded receiver reports (FRR) is obtained by integrating all information included in ordinary receiver reports (RR) and the information transferred at the Transport Layer (TL) by the first (TFRR) and third (BL) inter-protocol messages.

7. The procedure of one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the following steps are further executed:

- detecting concurrently with said faster signalling (FRR) if a condition for triggering a cell reselection procedure which depends on said measured parameters (MR) comes true after than said first condition is not more verified due to a QoS worsening under said attention level;
- suspending in the affirmative case the sending of the faster signalling (FRR) and entering a handshake phase (CCN, PDA) with the network (BSC) for selecting a new serving cell; then
- generating a command (TLastFRR) towards the Transport Layer (TL) to terminate the sending of said faster signalling (FRR) and reinstating the ordinary receiver reports (RR) with the default rate.

8. The procedure of one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said wireless network is connected to

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the Internet Network IP-PDN) and the Service Provider (ISP) transmits streaming services through the Internet Network IP-PDN).